

Fwd: Protests: GAC update

From: "Grant, Michael -NGM" <michael.grant@international.gc.ca>
To: "Termorshuizen, Cindy -DMA" <cindy.termorshuizen@international.gc.ca>, "Sunday, Julie -CFM" <julie.sunday@international.gc.ca>
Date: Thu, 17 Feb 2022 16:22:59 +0000

See first item below fyi.

Michael Grant
ADM Americas / SMA Amériques
1-343-548-5789

Begin forwarded message:

From: "De Maina, Noëlla -DALAS -GR" <Noella.DeMaina@international.gc.ca>
Date: February 17, 2022 at 10:56:39 AM EST
To: "Beaulieu, Sebastien -NGA" <Sebastien.Beaulieu@international.gc.ca>
Cc: "McCormick, Rachel -DALAS -HOM/CDM" <Rachel.McCormick@international.gc.ca>, "Robson, Duane -DALAS -TD" <Duane.Robson@international.gc.ca>, "Raiche, Vincent -NGQ" <vincent.raiche@international.gc.ca>, "Walsh, Eric - NGD" <Eric.Walsh@international.gc.ca>, *North America-HOM/CDM <D-NorthAmerica-HOM/CDM@international.gc.ca>, "Grant, Michael -NGM" <Michael.Grant@international.gc.ca>, "Vézina, Catherine -NGA" <Catherine.Vezina@international.gc.ca>, "Pharand, Marc-Andre -NGA" <Marc-Andre.Pharand@international.gc.ca>, "Dixon, Lucas -NGQ" <Lucas.Dixon@international.gc.ca>, "Denter, Christian -NGB" <Christian.Denter@international.gc.ca>, "Coulombe, Evelyne -NGB" <Evelyne.Coulombe@international.gc.ca>, "Vanderloo, Caroline -NGM" <Caroline.Vanderloo@international.gc.ca>, "Parsons, Alanna -NGB" <Alanna.Parsons@international.gc.ca>
Subject: FW: Protests: GAC update

Bonjour Sebastien,

Please find below the latest updates from DALAS regarding the protests in Canada:

Current Posture

On Wednesday Feb. 16, DALAS/Admin was contacted by 8 citizens of the United States in separate calls, to relate their concerns in regard to the ongoing "Freedom Convoy" protest in Canada. The reoccurring theme to these calls is concern over the Emergencies Act being invoked on Monday. Most called for an open dialogue between the PM and the protesters to resolve this situation.

On the evening of February 16 (afterhours), DALAS received two threatening messages from American citizens. On February 17, DALAS escalated the issue to diplomatic police and RCMP colleagues in WSHDC, who are now investigating the matter. In an abundance of caution, staff have been asked to work from home today, pending guidance from authorities. All staff are accounted for an safe.

Texas

U.S Senator Ted Cruz weighed in on the situation in Canada on February 16 by reposting a tweet by #DefiantL. Twitter suspended Defiant L's standard Twitter account Tuesday citing a "ban evasion" violation. The nameless account, infamous for posting side-by-side screenshots to show alleged hypocrisy from outstanding left-wing personalities, had amassed 350,000 followers earlier than its suspension. The account posts screenshots of tweets by customers displaying alleged hypocrisy, reminiscent of one who swore he would by no means take the "Trump vaccine" and eight months later boasted of being vaccinated and getting a booster.

On February 6, Senator Cruz demanded that the Federal Trade Commission open an investigation into GoFundMe after the crowdfunding site shut pages raising money for truck drivers protesting COVID-19 vaccine mandates at the U.S.-Canada border. The Texas Republican appeared on Fox News where he revealed he sent a letter to the FTC urging the agency to probe GoFundMe for potential 'deceptive trade practices' and accused the website of 'theft.' He also accused the site of removing the page because it didn't line up with Silicon Valley 'politics.' Listen, it is theft on the part of GoFundMe. Let me say -- the Canadian truckers are heroes. They are patriots marching for your freedom and for my freedom,' Cruz told Fox host Maria Bartiromo. Cruz also tweeted a video commentary on Monday saying GoFundMe is "deceiving consumers" by pulling a multimillion-dollar fund for the protest movement, over what the fundraising site said were acts of violence. On his own podcast "Verdict with ted Cruz" he published an episode entitled 'Trudeau Gets Trucked' criticizing the totalitarian left for controlling the working class, and commending the truckers as warriors for freedom across the world and stressing they have been polite Canadians in their efforts. Vancouver Mayor Kennedy Stewart took aim at Ted Cruz over his pro-convoy tweets. The U.S. senator lashed out at Stewart for saying "'Vancouver doesn't want' truck drivers there. Folks might feel differently with empty shelves" Stewart fired back: "Can someone tell @tedcruz our store shelves are fine thanks to the 90% of Canadian truckers who are fully vaccinated." The mayor also praised a group of counter-protesters who disrupted what he called the "#hateconvoy" to show their support of COVID-19 health measures. "Too busy high-fiving all the awesome folks in Vancouver that are helping push back" against the convoy, Stewart posted in a tweet.

Canada's public safety minister Marco Mendicino denounced the Republican support. In a statement Mendicino said, "We're Canadian. We have our own set of laws. We will follow them. We need to be vigilant about potential foreign interference. ... Whatever statements may have been made by some foreign official are neither here nor there."

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton said on February 9 that his office will [investigate](#) GoFundMe for blocking and withholding donations already made to the platform through its website. Removing the campaign from its site could violate the state's Deceptive Trade Practices Act, he said. "GoFundMe's response to an anti-mandate, pro-liberty movement should ring alarm bells to anyone using the donation platform and, more broadly, any American wanting to protect their constitutional rights," Attorney General Paxton said in a statement. "Many Texans donated to this worthy cause. I am acting to protect Texas consumers so that they know where their hard-



earned money is going, rather than allowing GoFundMe to divert money to another cause without the consent of Texas citizens."

Louisiana

Attorney General Jeff Landry issued a statement via Twitter on February 5th saying that his office will be investigating GoFundMe's decision to halt donations to the trucker convoys. The AG also told Louisiana donors to contact his office through the consumer protection division.

U.S. Senator John Kennedy (R) commented in length on the situation in a Fox News interview on February 15th. Senator Kennedy's assessment of the government response was negative, directing his criticism toward Prime Minister Trudeau. The full interview can be viewed [here](#). The Senator's office highlighted the following passage on his Twitter account: *"Look, I love Canadians. I love Canada, they're great allies. In my judgement, I think the Prime Minister is totally overreacting, I mean, he's hitting a gnat with a sledgehammer. I don't think he's even met with the truckers. And I don't think he really understands that this, as one commentator put it, that this by the truckers is a primal scream of frustration. It's not about the vaccines. And they have a point. I would ask the same question of Mr. Trudeau and President Biden: what is your roadmap to normalcy? You say follow the science. Ok, the virulence of omicron is waning. We're all immunized - either naturally or through vaccines. What is our roadmap back to normal? When is government going to get off our backs? Those are fair questions."*

Arkansas

Attorney General Leslie Rutledge also issued a similar statement announcing an investigation into GoFundMe's decision and asked donors to file complaints. Rutledge also included the following quote: *"GoFundMe has tried to decide what is and is not a worthy cause based on its skewed political bias without any regard to the Arkansans who have given their hard earned money to support this effort, GoFundMe is contributing to the cancel culture that has unfairly caused so much harm, and I will not stand for its hasty and possibly illegal revocation or diversion of donations."*

U.S. Senator John Boozman (R), the top Republican on the Senate Agriculture Committee, told reporters on February 10th that the blockade of the Ambassador Bridge on the U.S.-Canada border was concerning. *"If it continues to go on, it will have an impact on various products."* Boozman added he was concerned the blockade could *"exacerbate already increased prices"* for food and other goods.

DALAS will continue to monitor and report back accordingly.

Thank you,
Noëlla

Noëlla De Maina (she/her/elle)

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Begin forwarded message:

From: "Frenette, André -CNGNY -DHOM/CDMA"
<Andre.Frenette@international.gc.ca>
Date: February 15, 2022 at 1:24:58 PM CST
To: "Delouya, Ariel -MNPLS -HOM/CDM" <Ariel.Delouya@international.gc.ca>,
"Beaulieu, Sebastien -NGA" <Sebastien.Beaulieu@international.gc.ca>
Cc: "Vanderloo, Caroline -NGM" <Caroline.Vanderloo@international.gc.ca>,
"Coulombe, Evelyne -NGB" <Evelyne.Coulombe@international.gc.ca>, "Parsons,
Alanna -NGB" <Alanna.Parsons@international.gc.ca>, "Denter, Christian -NGB"
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Subject: RE: Protests: GAC update

Colleagues,

I would like to add a New York perspective to Ariel's informative update below. For the second week in a row, a group called Freedom Convoy of New York has staged a protest in front of the Consulate General in midtown Manhattan, in solidarity with the protesters in Ottawa. Today's protest included approximately 50 people and while they have been quite loud, they have been peaceful. Both Canadian and US flags were visible, as were anti-mandate and anti-government signage. Social media reports indicate anti-mandate protests may continue weekly in New York until July 4th, but it is unclear if Canada will be a target on an ongoing basis. In both cases, CNGNY was aware in advance of the planned protest, and was in communication with NYPD and Department of State Diplomatic Security Services (DSS) who were on hand to monitor and respond if required. Photos below.

We are celebrating our annual Canada Day in Albany week (virtually) and engaging with a number of elected officials and representatives of the private sector. HOM has been delivering key messages on the ongoing situation. Comments so far on the events in Canada – and the measures announced yesterday – are quite supportive. A more fulsome report will follow at the end of the week or early next.

André







From: Delouya, Ariel -MNPLS -HOM/CDM <Ariel.Delouya@international.gc.ca>
Sent: February 15, 2022 12:18 PM
To: Beaulieu, Sebastien -NGA <Sebastien.Beaulieu@international.gc.ca>
Cc: Vanderloo, Caroline -NGM <Caroline.Vanderloo@international.gc.ca>; Coulombe, Evelyne -NGB <Evelyne.Coulombe@international.gc.ca>; Parsons, Alanna -NGB <Alanna.Parsons@international.gc.ca>; Denter, Christian -NGB <Christian.Denter@international.gc.ca>; Ramcharan, Lisette -NGQ <Lisette.Ramcharan@international.gc.ca>; Raiche, Vincent -NGQ <vincent.raiche@international.gc.ca>; Vézina, Catherine -NGA <Catherine.Vezina@international.gc.ca>; Pharand, Marc-Andre -NGA <Marc-Andre.Pharand@international.gc.ca>; Dixon, Lucas -NGQ <Lucas.Dixon@international.gc.ca>; *US-HOM/CDM <D-US-HOM-CDM@international.gc.ca>; McLeod, Colin -MNPLS -GR

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Subject: RE: Protests: GAC update

Sebastien,

Please see some of the feedback we have received in recent days in response to the trucker protests in Canada:

- On Thursday, February 10, MNPLS/IBD was contacted by two agricultural commodities companies, Scoular (commodities traders based in Omaha, NE, and Puris (pea protein processors) with headquarters in the MNPLS region and operations, farmers, and suppliers in Canada. Both companies expressed concern about that morning's blockage at Emerson/Pembina, reporting that trucks were either turned away altogether or forced to find nearby open border crossings (a significant detour of up to 150 miles). Both companies mentioned that the extra mileage to find an open border crossing complicates their operations, increases their costs, and diminishes their margins, making Canadian commodities less attractive. On Monday, February 14, General Mills (food company) reached out to MNPLS/IBD to note they were seeing supply chain disruptions resulting from the blockades at the Emerson and Coutts crossings (General Mills re-routed through Sprague, MB and North Portal, SK).
- On Thursday, February 10, South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem appeared on Sean Hannity's Fox News show. [The Governor later tweeted](#) a link to the video of her appearance, complaining about "the media...supporting leaders like Trudeau and others taking away people's personal freedoms..."
- On Friday, February 11, CBC reported that Manitoba Premier Heather Stefanson set up time to speak with North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum. MNPLS is seeking further information about that conversation.
- Also on Friday, February 11, Drew Combs of the North Dakota Trade Office was quoted in an [Agweek article](#) saying that "Any kind of disruption [like protests that impede traffic at Ports of Entry]..." cause ripple effects that add time and money to trade and supply chains.
- On Sunday, February 13, MNPLS noted morning news reports of a potential delay at the Fort Frances/International Falls crossing due to planned demonstrations. By 5pm, the Ontario Provincial Police were tweeting that any delays had been resolved.
- On Tuesday, February 14, North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum said in a [KVRR \(Fox-affiliate in Fargo, North Dakota\) report](#) that it's critical that the Port of Entry in Emerson, Manitoba be allowed to open again to facilitate the flow of international trade between the U.S. and Canada. Governor Burgum was quoted as saying "In many cases, Canada's got vaccination rates that are even higher than the United States. It feels to me that some of this controversy is unnecessary...and we should just get that border working and flowing back and forth as it should." He noted the closest border crossing to Emerson is more than 150 miles away to the west.

AD

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Sent: February 13, 2022 10:27 AM
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Cc: Vanderloo, Caroline -NGM <Caroline.Vanderloo@international.gc.ca>; Coulombe, Evelyne -NGB <Evelyne.Coulombe@international.gc.ca>; Parsons, Alanna -NGB <Alanna.Parsons@international.gc.ca>; Denter, Christian -NGB <Christian.Denter@international.gc.ca>; Ramcharan, Lisette -NGQ <Lisette.Ramcharan@international.gc.ca>; Raiche, Vincent -NGQ <vincent.raiche@international.gc.ca>; Vézina, Catherine -NGA <Catherine.Vezina@international.gc.ca>; Pharand, Marc-Andre -NGA <Marc-Andre.Pharand@international.gc.ca>; Dixon, Lucas -NGQ <Lucas.Dixon@international.gc.ca>
Subject: Protests: GAC update

FYI. Bon dimanche.
S.

Sébastien Beaulieu
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Début du message transféré :

De: "Beaulieu, Sebastien -NGA" <Sebastien.Beaulieu@international.gc.ca>
Date: 13 février 2022 à 11:22:14 HNE
À: *USS-DMA Advisors/Conseillers <D-USS-DMAAdvisors@international.gc.ca>, *DMT-Policy/Politiques <D-DMT-Policy@international.gc.ca>, *MINA-Dept Unit/Unité ministérielle <D-MINA-Dept-Unit@international.gc.ca>, *MINT-Dept Unit/Unité ministérielle <D-MINT-Dept-Unit@international.gc.ca>
Cc: "Grant, Michael -NGM" <Michael.Grant@international.gc.ca>, "Wilshaw, Sara -BFM" <Sara.Wilshaw@international.gc.ca>, "McInnis, Crista -BFM" <Crista.McInnis@international.gc.ca>, "Hutchison, David -BPD" <David.Hutchison@international.gc.ca>, "Christie, Bruce -TFM" <Bruce.Christie@international.gc.ca>, "Alexander, Arun -TFMA" <Arun.Alexander@international.gc.ca>, "Levesque, Stéphane -LCM" <Stephane.Levesque@international.gc.ca>, "Mojsej, Charles -LCD" <Charles.Mojsej@international.gc.ca>, "Loken, Martin -WSHDC -GR" <Martin.Loken@international.gc.ca>, "Baird, Katherine -WSHDC -DHOM/CDMA" <Katherine.Baird@international.gc.ca>, "McIntyre, Graeme -WSHDC -GR" <Graeme.McIntyre@international.gc.ca>, "Layton, John -WSHDC -TD" <John.Layton@international.gc.ca>, "Bourély, Nadia -WSHDC -TD" <Nadia.Bourely@international.gc.ca>, "Kane, Lee -WSHDC -TD" <Lee.Kane@international.gc.ca>, "McCardell, Sandra -EGM" <Sandra.McCardell@international.gc.ca>, "Hulan, Heidi -PFM" <Heidi.Hulan@international.gc.ca>, "Benjamin, Martin -IFM" <Martin.Benjamin@international.gc.ca>
Objet: Protests: GAC update

Here is an update on the protests and related high-level engagement and reporting from our network.

Some of you have received some of this content separately this am in a package for DMA.

Also included below is reporting from LDN/R.Goodale.

S.

GAC Protests Update

Top Level

1. GAC keeping a close eye on situation in the US and around the world through our network of missions, and sharing of relevant reporting from missions with PCO (F&DP and IAS).
2. Eyes on amplification of these protests around the world (incl. this PM's Superbowl), and the impact on image/reputation of Canada as a trading partner (supply chains) and on our perceived ability to respond and address the situation.

Latest developments:

- US Ambassador Cohen raised the protests with MINA on Friday afternoon, in the context of a secure call/démarche on Ukraine.
- PMO's public readout of Friday PM-POTUS call referred explicitly to American "influence" and "financial support", and pointed to the flooding of the Ottawa 911 lines originating from the U.S. (Pasted below.)
- The U.S. -- and we -- are watching closely the U.S. copycat protests and caravan and today's Superbowl (LA, 1830 ET).



- For example, 300 protesters (100 vehicles) gathered near the Peace Bridge on the US side in Buffalo on Saturday (no major disruption reported).
- Anecdotal: Seeing growing number of US flags in Ottawa and Windsor protests.



Roll-Up of Ministerial and Senior Engagements

- PM-POTUS Friday.
- TC Omar Alghabra -- DoT Pete Buttigieg (Thursday)
- PS Marco Mendicino -- DHS Alejandro Mayorkas (Friday)
- NSIA Jody Thomas -- Homeland Security Advisor Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall

Relevant Statements by:

- Gretchen Whitmer (Michigan Governor): "We are pushing the Canadian Government to resolve this swiftly and safely." (11 Feb.)
- Teamsters Union President Jim Hoffa "denouncing" the convoy (Feb.10)

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaks with the President of the United States of America Joe Biden

PMO -- February 11, 2022 Ottawa, Ontario

Today, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau spoke with the President of the United States of America, Joe Biden, to discuss the ongoing illegal blockades taking place across Canada, which are threatening trade, jobs, the economy, and communities on both sides of the border.

The two leaders discussed the critical importance of resolving access to the Ambassador Bridge and other ports of entry as quickly as possible, given their role as vital bilateral trade corridors and how essential they are to the extensive interconnections between our two countries – and our peoples.

The Prime Minister underlined the coordination taking place between all orders of government in Canada in responding to these challenges, as well as between relevant authorities in Canada and the United States. The leaders agreed to continue closely coordinating bilateral efforts to ensure our respective authorities have all of the tools and information required to bring these illegal actions to an end as quickly as possible.

The Prime Minister and President discussed the American and global influence on the protests, including financial support. The Prime Minister expressed concern that the flooding of Ottawa's 911 phone lines yesterday originated in the United States.

The two leaders agreed to stay in close touch.

Reporting from our network

From: Goodale, Ralph -LDN -HOM/CDM <Ralph.Goodale@international.gc.ca>
Sent: February 13, 2022 8:31 AM
To: Beaulieu, Sebastien -NGA <Sebastien.Beaulieu@international.gc.ca>
Cc: Dubé, Nathalie -LDN -TD <Nathalie.Dube@international.gc.ca>
Subject: Re: Canadian protests: Welcome HoM reporting from posts

Hello from LDN:

While the Russia/Ukraine crisis and the political tribulations of Boris Johnson continue to dominate British news, the convoy protests in Canada are getting some minor attention. And the topic is being raised marginally in contacts with counterparts from other countries in London.

Two themes: Disbelief that this is happening in Canada of all places, and no one wants this to become an unwelcome Canadian export as the protests spread elsewhere.

The phenomenon reflects worldwide weariness with the burdens imposed by COVID. Two years is a long time. NOTE - After the first long dark COVID winter, the Johnson government has generally been on the side of opening things up as quickly as possible. And vaccination rates in the U.K. have always been near the best.

There have been two small, brief anti-lockdown, "pro-trucker" demonstrations near Canada House in London. There was also a noisy protest outside Parliament, during which some Canadian flags were in evidence, which morphed into an anti-Starmer event when the Leader of the Opposition happened by. LDN was quickly in touch with his office and were assured that Sir Keir was fine and had no concerns about Canada.

A troubling dimension of these protests is when more militant alt-right, extremist, racist, misogynist, anarchist, and other hate groups latch onto the anti-lockdown protesters. This has tended to happen in all the "convoy" type of events.

A critical question is to what extent are the protests in Canada reflecting legitimate homegrown concern about the impacts of prolonged lockdowns, and how much of this activity is actually organised, animated, directed and financed by alt-right insurrectionists from the US. The disruptive events in Ottawa seem to have been extensively and meticulously pre-organised.

Two consequences need to be watched very carefully - the negative economic and reputational impacts from trade disruptions, and the possible impression that Canadian police, security and intelligence systems are incapable of responding effectively to blatant, large-scale, illegal conduct.

Ralph G.

MDRID (Feb 11): Print and broadcast media in Spain have been covering the protests for most of the past week. In the last few days, this has also included coverage of similar protests building up in France and Belgium. HoM was asked by a right-leaning radio station to do a live interview on the subject to "explain the official Canadian government position", which we politely declined. Spain does not have a significant anti-

vax movement, and there have not been any vaccine mandates here.. There is no copycat protest forming here, there haven't been political pronouncements on the Canadian protests, nor any private comments made.

HAGUE (Feb 12): Freedom convoy protest arrives in The Hague. Inspired by protests in Ottawa and Paris, a freedom convoy of Dutch protesters arrived in The Hague Friday, including a number brandishing Canadian flags. The total number of protesters is unknown but is estimated at around 100 vehicles. Authorities have moved to end the protest. At present it remains unclear whether this will turn into a multi-day blockade of The Hague. PM Rutte has not yet commented on the situation. HAGUE chancery is being guarded by a police car as a precaution due to the protests' strong links with Canada.

WLGTN (Feb 11): The protests continued Friday night and Saturday, with media reporting anywhere from hundreds to thousands of people present. The police have struggled to remove vehicles as a number of tow companies have received threats, and as such, did not want to be involved. According to media reports, authorities have also considered using military assets, such as heavy haulage vehicles, to remove vehicles that are illegally parked. Some streets around Parliament, such as Molesworth St., remain blocked, with media reporting more than 100 trucks, campervans and cars blocking the road. Police are working with Wellington City Council to remove food trucks and limit the ability for people to bring food to the protestors, through the use of bylaws.

NYT Editorial (Online Feb.10, Print version of Feb.13)

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

The Ottawa Trucker Protests Are a Test of Democracy

Credit...Amru Salahuddin/Anadolu Agency, via Getty Images

By The Editorial Board

By the standards of mass [protests](#) around the world, the “Freedom Convoy” snarling Downtown [Ottawa](#) ranks as a nuisance. The number of protesters, [about 8,000 at their peak](#), is modest; there have been no serious injuries or altercations, the truckers stopped blaring their horns after residents got a temporary court injunction against them, and most Canadians support neither the truckers nor their cause. Yet what's happening in Canada deserves close attention in the United States and across the world.

In an increasingly polarized political environment, the Canadian truckers became an instant cause célèbre. Donations poured in, prompting GoFundMe to pull the plug on the campaign after a few days [under a policy](#) that “prohibits the promotion of violence and harassment,” a void that was quickly filled by right-wing crowdfunding platforms. Copycat convoys [have appeared as far afield as Australia and New Zealand](#).

Inevitably, a chorus of cheers arose from south of the border, led by Donald Trump's [declaration](#) that “the Freedom Convoy is peacefully protesting the harsh policies of far-left lunatic Justin Trudeau who has destroyed Canada with insane Covid mandates,” referring to the prime minister. Senator Ted Cruz [called](#) the Canadian truckers “heroes”; Elon Musk [tweeted](#), “Canadian truckers rule”; Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene [suggested](#) that the “corporate Communists” at GoFundMe should be arrested.

The raucous images from Canada, a country widely regarded as a model of calm, tolerance and reason, demonstrate the worrisome degree to which Covid-19 mandates and other regulations have become a potent, and perhaps lasting symbol, for the far right of what they see as governmental assaults on their “freedoms.” The Canadian truckers initially [launched their convoy](#) in late January to protest the requirement that those crossing the Canadian-U.S. border must be vaccinated to avoid a 14-day quarantine. That in itself was a minority cause — only [about a tenth](#) of cross-border drivers are not vaccinated, according to the Canadian Trucking Alliance, which disavowed the protest. (And [86 percent of Canadians](#) as a whole have received at least one shot.) A survey by the market research firm Leger found that [65 percent](#) of Canadians believe the Freedom Convoy represents only a “small minority of selfish Canadians.”

As the big rigs brought traffic to a crawl in the Canadian capital and began blaring their horns, Canadians who do not share their grievances began to call for an end to the protests. The Ottawa police chief [called it](#) a “siege,” the Ontario premier [said](#) it was an “occupation,” the Ottawa mayor declared a state of emergency, and on Monday, Mr. Trudeau angrily told Parliament that the protests [have to stop](#). He [stopped well short](#) of authorizing the use of military force against them but went as far as to say the protesters are “trying to blockade our economy, our democracy and our fellow citizens’ daily lives.”

We [disagree](#) with the protesters’ cause, but they have a right to be noisy and even disruptive. Protests are a necessary form of expression in a democratic society, particularly for those whose opinions do not command broad popular support. Governments have a responsibility to prevent violence by protesters, but they must be willing to accept some degree of disruption by those seeking to be heard. The challenge for public officials — the [same one faced by Minneapolis and other cities in 2020](#) during the protests after the murder of George Floyd — is to maintain a balance between public health and safety and a functioning society, with the right to free expression. Entertaining the use of force to disperse or contain legal protests is wrong. [As Mr. Trudeau said in November 2020](#), in expressing his support of a yearlong [protest by farmers in India](#) that blocked major highways to New Delhi, “Canada will always be there to defend the right of peaceful protest.”

The convoy has captured an underlying frustration in a broad swath of the Canadian public. Like the [“gilets jaunes” \(yellow vests\) movement](#) in France that clogged the streets of Paris and other cities for months in late 2018 and early 2019, the Canadian truckers are [motivated by anger](#) over [a wide variety of grievances](#) that cannot be easily resolved through negotiations. Their power lies in their ability to disrupt through social media, using images of a few thousand people immobilizing a national capital and hampering international trade to mobilize global support.

The gilets jaunes, however, never found a cause with wide appeal. The Canadian truckers have, and their success in turning coronavirus restrictions into a rallying cry for the disaffected is what makes the Ottawa protest significant. In France, [a convoy of dozens of trucks](#) and other vehicles, inspired by the Ottawa protests, headed to Paris from southern France on Wednesday, prompting the police to announce a ban on such protests as a risk to public order. A U.S. group calling itself “Convoy to D.C. 2022” has announced an American version of the protest for next month, though Meta quickly removed the group’s page from Facebook for violating its policies on spreading vaccine misinformation.

These nascent efforts pose a challenge for Mr. Trudeau, President Biden and every other leader searching for ways to restore a degree of normalcy while maintaining defenses against a disease that still has the power to fill hospitals and kill in large numbers. Effective leadership in this stage of the pandemic means finding ways to confront the understandable frustrations and legitimate protests engendered by the pandemic without stoking more strife, compromising the rule of law or succumbing to unreasonable demands. With populists like Mr. Trump primed to attack any Covid-19 action by the government as an assault on “freedom,” safely exiting the pandemic will be that much more treacherous. Allowing nonviolent, even if disruptive, protest is an important tool for maintaining social cohesion in a polarized society.